

The Forerunner of al-Ghazālī

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IN his *al-Munkidh min al-Ḍalāl*¹ al-Ghazālī states that he studied the works of al-Muḥāsibī, together with those of Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, al-Junayd, Shiblī, and Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, and of these Ḥārith b. Asad al-Muḥāsibī (ob. 243/857) was the earliest and the most prolific writer, and to him al-Ghazālī owes more of his teaching than has been generally realized, and much that has been attributed to al-Ghazālī as representing his original ideas, is in fact based upon the earlier teaching of al-Muḥāsibī and, in many instances, is directly borrowed from him.

This seems to have been the case with a good deal of al-Ghazālī's eschatological teaching, for passage after passage in, e.g. the *Durrat al-Fākhira* shows a close resemblance to the contents of al-Muḥāsibī's *al-Ba'th wa'l-Nushūr* (MS. Paris, 1913) and the *Kitāb al-Tawahhum* (MS. Oxford Hunt. 611). But it is in his ascetical and mystical teaching that al-Ghazālī has built most obviously upon the foundations laid by al-Muḥāsibī, with an occasional acknowledgment of his indebtedness, but more often by the simple appropriation of al-Muḥāsibī's definitions, doctrines, and illustrations, to serve his own purposes. In the account which al-Ghazālī gives of his own religious experience, culminating in his conversion, he has very obviously taken al-Muḥāsibī's account of his spiritual difficulties and experiences as his model.²

In his *Iḥyā' fī 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Ghazālī seeks to set forth a rule of life which will enable the believer to carry out the law of God, first of all in regard to the outward conduct, the "actions of the members",³ and then in regard to the inner life, the "actions of the heart", which he divides into those

¹ p. 20 (ed. Cairo, A.H. 1309).

² Cf. *Munkidh min al-Ḍalāl*, pp. 1 ff., and al-Muḥāsibī's *Waṣāya (Naṣā'ih)*, fols. 1b ff. (MS. Br. Mus. Or. 7900).

³ *Iḥyā'*, parts i and ii.

which are pernicious, requiring the discipline of asceticism to counteract them, and those which are wholesome, the virtues, which can be acquired by the help of the Divine grace and will render the soul fit, if God so will, to attain to the rank of the saints, the lovers of God who enter into fellowship with Him.¹ The chief of the things which corrupt the heart, which make for destruction, al-Ghazālī holds to be lust, the sins of the tongue, anger, hatred and jealousy, the love of this world, covetousness, hypocrisy, vanity, pride (عجب) and self-conceit (كبر), and finally self-delusion. All these pernicious qualities al-Ghazālī regards as diseases of the heart (امراض القلب) which therefore require healing. The remedies for this corruption are the things which are wholesome for the heart, which make for salvation, which are Repentance, Patience and Gratitude, Fear and Hope, Poverty and Asceticism, Unification and Dependence on God, Love, Longing and Satisfaction, a good Intention, Single-mindedness (اخلاص) and Sincerity (صدق), Self-examination (محااسبة) and Meditation (مراقبة), Reflection, and the Remembrance of Death.

al-Muḥāsibī deals with practically all of these subjects in his *Ri'āya li Ḥuqūq Allāh* and others of his works, where he also takes the view that these sins are "diseases", for which he provides a remedy. His list of capital sins includes jealousy in its different forms, sins of the tongue, love of this world and of wealth, hypocrisy, to which he devotes many chapters, conceit and pride, self-delusion, and the lusts of the self. His remedies for these sins and the rule of life by which they may be avoided, and the sincere believer may be led onwards and upwards, until he reaches the unitive life in God, include all the subjects dealt with by al-Ghazālī in Part iv of the *Iḥyā'*.

In dealing with sin in general, al-Ghazālī divides sins into those committed by the servant against God alone and those

¹ Ibid., parts iii and iv.

which he commits also against fellow-servants,¹ a distinction which al-Muḥāsibī had also drawn.² al-Ghazālī, like other Muslim theologians, classifies sins as venial (صغائر) and mortal (كبائر), mentions that the number of mortal sins according to the theologians varies from seven to seventy, and gives some of the most prominent, corresponding to the list made by al-Muḥāsibī, and finally gives al-Muḥāsibī's conclusion that all that God penalizes with Hell-fire is a mortal sin.³ He also notes that the venial sin may become mortal, and that the chief causes of this are contumacy and stubbornness, and he quotes the statement that there is no venial sin combined with contumacy and no mortal sin if forgiveness is asked for it, a principle also laid down by al-Muḥāsibī, who gives his source.⁴

Of temptation, and especially the temptation which is the work of Satan, al-Ghazālī observes that first the idea of doing a thing enters into the mind (خاطر), then the idea arouses the desire to do it, desire leads the heart to decide upon doing it and the decision leads to action to that end, and so the thing is done. But if the original suggestion can be checked at the start, it will not then lead to sin.⁵ So also writes al-Muḥāsibī, "The suggestions of Satan have no significance in themselves, their significance lies in the fact that you are forbidden to accept them and if the suggestion is rejected, you are safe, and what you are called upon to reject is not something great and powerful but what is little and weak," which, if not resisted, might lead to sin. He says elsewhere that no temptation to error or sin can do any injury, unless the soul responds to it.⁶

Dealing with the capital sins, al-Ghazālī characterizes

¹ *Iḥyā'*, iv, 14.

² *Kutāb Aḥkam al-Tawbat*, fol. 13a (Cairo Taṣ. Sh. 3).

³ *Iḥyā'*, iv, 15. Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, op. cit., fol. 18a.

⁴ *Iḥyā'*, iv, 28; *Kutāb Aḥkam al-Tawbat*, fol. 14b.

⁵ *Iḥyā'*, iii, 23 ff.

⁶ *Ri'āya*, fol. 48b, 91b.

hypocrisy as being a secret desire of the soul more injurious than the sensual desires. It is polytheism in that it means service done for the sake of another than God, setting up the good-pleasure of men as another god. al-Ghazālī compares it, in its insidiousness, with the creeping of the ant.¹ al-Muḥāsibī's teaching is obviously the basis for much of this and al-Ghazālī actually refers to him in this connection.² al-Muḥāsibī had also taught that Hypocrisy was always desire for something other than God and desire to gain something from men, in appearing to serve God. He also compares it with the creeping of the ant and to him, too, it is polytheism, for the hypocrite, he says, "is a polytheist in what he does, seeking the praise of the creatures as well as the praise of the Creator."³ The remedy for hypocrisy al-Ghazālī finds to be single-mindedness (اخلاص). It is, he says, necessary that all works should be done for the sake of God, the heart not resting content with the praise of men, nor despairing on account of their censure. "Know," he adds, "that hypocrisy arises from thinking too highly of mankind and the remedy is to regard them as mere servants under the authority of God and to reckon them as of no account, so that you may escape from hypocrisy on their account."⁴ So also al-Muḥāsibī, using the simile of the purification of silver from dross and of wheat from tares, urges the purification of the heart from hypocrisy that it may be single-minded towards God. Let the servant resist all desire for the praise and favours of men and let his thoughts be concentrated on the will of his Lord, and let all be done for His sake. Let him free himself from the dissipation of his interests through consideration of the creatures, and so be saved from the sin of hypocrisy and men-pleasing, knowing that his relations with the creatures are of no consequence, while his relations

with God are of the greatest importance both in this world and the next.¹

al-Ghazālī devotes several chapters to the discussion of Pride in its various forms, including that of arrogance, which he regards as an encroachment upon what is the prerogative of God alone, for He has said, "Greatness is My mantle and Majesty My veil, and he who snatches from Me one or the other, I will cast into Hell," and he goes on to quote the words of the Prophet as reported by 'Abd Allāh b. Salām, "None will enter Paradise who has within his heart the weight of a grain of mustard seed of arrogance." Also he gives the tradition of Ibn 'Abbās that the Prophet said, "When the servant humbles himself God raises him up to the seventh heaven," and the words ascribed to Christ that "as the seed grows in soft soil, so wisdom dwells in the humble heart".² All of these had been used by al-Muḥāsibī to point the same moral.³ Like al-Muḥāsibī, al-Ghazālī teaches that arrogance means a wrong attitude towards both God and one's fellow-men, and he, as al-Muḥāsibī had done, gives Wabī's parable of the rain, which, when it is absorbed by the roots of the trees, strengthens the qualities they already possess, and if they bear sweet fruit, will make it sweeter still, and if sour fruit, will make it still more sour, and so also the proud man, if he gains knowledge, will become prouder still. al-Ghazālī's remedies for pride are also those of al-Muḥāsibī, and he quotes the story of the outcast of the children of Israel, who passed by a devout Jew, wearing a turban to mark his dignity, and the outcast said within himself that if he sat beside that pious man, it might be that God would have mercy on him, but the pious man repulsed him, in his pride, and God spake by the mouth of a prophet declaring that He had forgiven the outcast and rejected that pious man, and the turban which marked his dignity was transferred

¹ *Iḥyā'*, iii, 264-5, 275, 277 ff.

² *Ibid.*, iii, 271.

³ *Ri'āya*, fol. 40a ff.

⁴ *Ayyuha'l-Walad*, p. 68 (ed. Beyrout).

¹ *Ri'āya*, fols. 54a, 46a.

² *Iḥyā'*, iii, pp. 290 ff.

³ *Ri'āya*, fols. 105a, 105b, 106a.

from his head to that of the outcast, because this poor man had humbled himself before God and had submitted to Him in his heart. This is followed by another tradition of the children of Israel,¹ and both are quoted by al-Muḥāsibī in the same connection.²

In dealing with Pride in the form of self-conceit (عجب) al-Ghazālī refers to the traditional saying of the Prophet that there were three things leading to destruction, "Avarice obeyed and lust followed and a man's pride in himself," and mentions in this connection sayings of Abū Tha'laba, Ibn Mas'ūd, and Ibn Jurayj and also the question put to 'Ā'isha, "When is a man a sinner?" and her answer, "When he thinks himself to be righteous."³ All of these are quoted by al-Muḥāsibī on this subject.⁴ al-Ghazālī includes in his types of pride, pride in bodily beauty and strength, in intellect, in nobility of birth, in the number of one's children, in opinions right or wrong, and all of these find a place in al-Muḥāsibī's teaching. As an example of presumption, al-Ghazālī quotes the story of David who declared, "Not an hour passes of the night or day but some faithful servant of the house of David is worshipping Thee, either praying or fasting or praising Thee," and God rebuked David for his presumption in supposing that this came to pass save through His help and in His strength. This and the following comments, including a reference to Job, are found word for word in al-Muḥāsibī.⁵

al-Ghazālī uses the same illustrations as al-Muḥāsibī in discussing pride of wealth and possessions, and quotes the story of Abū Dharr going to the mosque with the Prophet, who bade him lift up his head and Abū Dharr saw near him a man clad in fine raiment and another meanly dressed, and the Prophet, indicating this latter, said, "This man is better

¹ *Iḥyā'*, iii, pp. 301 ff.; *Munkidh*, p. 34.

² *Ri'āya*, fols. 108b, 109b, 110a.

³ *Iḥyā'*, iii, p. 318.

⁴ *Ri'āya*, fol. 94b.

⁵ *Iḥyā'*, iii, pp. 321, 322. Cf. *Ri'āya*, fols. 94b, 96a.

than a world full of such as that," a story also given in the *Ri'āya*.¹

al-Ghazālī follows closely in the steps of al-Muḥāsibī in his treatment of the sins of envy and jealousy, and in discussing the sin of avarice (جمل) he gives the same story as al-Muḥāsibī of how the Prophet, when circumambulating the Ka'aba, saw a man clinging to the covers upon it and bewailing the greatness of his sin. The Prophet asked him if his sin was greater than the regions of the earth, or the mountains, or the ocean, or the heavens, or the throne of God, and to each question the man replied that it was greater. At last the Prophet asked, "Is your sin greater than God Himself?" and the man said, "Nay, indeed, God is greater," and confessed that he was possessed of great wealth and feared lest it should bring him to the fires of Hell, and the Prophet answered, "Begone, do not burn me with your Hell-fire: if you were to pray for a thousand years and to weep until the rivers of your tears were such as to water the trees and then were to die worthy of blame, God would cast you into Hell. Did you not know that avarice is infidelity and the infidel goes to Hell?"²

al-Ghazālī also follows al-Muḥāsibī in his estimate of the sins of the tongue and its proneness to evil, and gives the same advice to keep it locked up except for speech that is profitable. He quotes the same traditions of the Prophet bidding men beware of the dangers of the tongue and to seek refuge in the safety of silence, and gives a similar list of the sins for which the tongue is responsible: lying, cursing, unseemly ridicule, contention, breach of confidence, backbiting (غيبه), calumny (غيبة).³ In discussing the love of wealth and the superiority of poverty, al-Ghazālī inserts a long section from al-Muḥāsibī's *Waṣāya* (*Naṣā'ih*), acknowledging its authorship and expressing his view that

¹ *Iḥyā'*, iii, p. 325. *Ri'āya*, fol. 103b, 104a.

² *Iḥyā'*, iii, p. 221. Cf. *Waṣāya* (*Naṣā'ih*), fols. 11a ff.

³ *Iḥyā'*, iii, pp. 93 ff. Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *al-Tawba*, fols. 4 ff.

al-Muḥāsibī was the savant (حبر) of the nation in regard to religious practice, because he based his teaching on his own wide experience.¹

al-Ghazālī treats finally of the sin of self-delusion (غرور) and enumerates the different classes of those who delude themselves, both of believers and unbelievers, taking the same line as al-Muḥāsibī in attacking the self-righteous, who believe that God cannot punish them, and those who mistake the outward appearance of righteousness for the reality within the heart.² So also al-Muḥāsibī points to the self-deluded who do not realize that to have a knowledge of good is not identical with being good, and those who deceive themselves by thinking that the outward observance of religious duties can take the place of faith and a pure heart, who reckon themselves to be already saved, when in reality they are already speeding towards destruction.³

When he turns to wholesome things, which make for salvation, and are the antidotes for the above-mentioned sins, al-Ghazālī begins with Repentance, as the first step on the way, and illustrates his teaching with the same traditions as al-Muḥāsibī, taking the latter's view that repentance arises from the feeling that sin is a danger to salvation and should lead to contrition for wrongdoing in the past and to the intention to abandon sin in the future and to offer redress, and this will mean self-examination in regard to the past and the present.⁴

al-Ghazālī lays great stress on the virtues of dependence on God and trust in Him and, like al-Muḥāsibī, expresses the view that they are the result of faith in God as the Sole Provider, on Whom all things depend, and the believer will therefore rely completely on Him and submit his own will

¹ *Iḥyā'*, iii, pp. 229 ff. Cf. *Waṣāya*, fols. 4b ff.

² *Iḥyā'*, iii, pp. 334 ff.

³ *Ri'āya*, fols. 124a ff.

⁴ *Iḥyā'*, iv, pp. 11, 12 ff. Cf. *Ri'āya*, fols. 34b, 75b ff.; *al-Taḥṭa*, fol. 13a.

to the Divine Will, in complete trust (تفويض), and he repeats al-Muḥāsibī's assurances of the peace of mind and body which this trust effects.¹ Of Hope, al-Ghazālī says that it is a "state", that is, temporary, in those who seek, but a "station" in those who are travellers on the way, that is, it is abiding, it has become an established virtue. al-Muḥāsibī had noted the difference between the hope of beginners on the path, who hope for mercy on their sins, and the hope of those who have advanced on the way and whose hope is to enter into the joy of their Lord.² al-Ghazālī's teaching on Holy Fear (خوف), the complement of Hope, is very like that of al-Muḥāsibī, and also his teaching on Patience, which he regards as the response to God's affliction of the soul in this world, which is greatest for those whom He loves best, whom He desires to make perfect thereby.³ So also al-Muḥāsibī writes, "Your j-y consists in suffering in this world and to those who endure it with patience, it is found a light thing and thereby their sins are done away."⁴

al-Ghazālī's devotional teaching also owes much to that of his great predecessor. His section on Prayer begins with this statement, "God differs from (earthly) kings, for all His unique Majesty and Greatness, in that He inspires His creatures to ask of Him and to make their plea unto Him, and He differs from the sovereigns (of this world) in opening the door and lifting the veil and giving leave to His servants to enter into familiar intercourse with Him: nor does He limit Himself to giving them permission, but He shows His kindness in inspiring them with the desire for this and calling them unto Him. Others, kings who are but creatures themselves, do not freely grant a private audience except after

¹ *Iḥyā'*, iv, pp. 211 ff., 224 ff. Cf. al-Muḥāsibī, *Makāsib wa'l Wara'*, fols. 32a, 32b; *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, fol. 59b, 60a; *Masā'il fi-A'māl*, fols. 135b ff.

² *Iḥyā'*, iv, pp. 123, 124. Cf. *Ri'āya*, fols. 124a ff.; *Ādāb al-Nufūs*, fol. 67b; *Bad' man anāb ila Allāh*, fol. 21b.

³ *Iḥyā'*, iv, pp. 55, 60 ff.

⁴ *Waṣāya*, fols. 11b, 12a.

the offer of gifts and bribery.”¹ With this is to be compared a passage occurring in al-Muḥāsibī’s *Fahm al-Ṣalāt*, where he writes, “We have seen earthly kings who do not give leave to men in general to enter into their presence—but the Supreme King, by His grace, gives leave to all His servants, high and low, the sinner and the obedient, to enter into familiar converse with Him; indeed He is not satisfied with giving leave, but goes so far as to lay it upon the servant as an obligation and to stir up his heart to that,” and continues at some length in the same strain.²

al-Ghazālī’s section on the need for humility in Prayer adheres closely to al-Muḥāsibī’s teaching on the subject, in the *Waṣāya*. al-Ghazālī insists on the need for reverence and awe on the part of those who come into the Presence of God. If this is lacking, he says, what is the worth of your prayer? Prayer is confidential intercourse (مناجاة) and how can that exist with neglect? He quotes the words of the Prophet who said, “God does not regard the prayer of any man whose heart is not present with his body.”³ Compare with this al-Muḥāsibī’s exhortation to his readers, “Fear God and let your hearts be present with your bodies and stand before God as slaves stand in the presence of their masters, with humility and awe, and reverence. . . . O my brethren, recognize the power of Him before Whom you stand and show Him that reverence which is His due.”⁴ al-Muḥāsibī brings forward examples of the great reverence shown by the earliest Muslims, which are also quoted by al-Ghazālī, e.g. how ‘Alī b. Ḥusayn, when he performed the ablutions, used to change colour and when asked the reason said, “Do you not realize in Whose Presence I am about to stand?”⁵ al-Ghazālī devotes several chapters to the subject of the “presence”

¹ *Iḥyā’*, i, p. 169.

² Fol. 55b.

³ *Iḥyā’*, i, pp. 134, 142 ff.

⁴ *Waṣāya* (*Naṣā’ih*), fol. 17b, 18a.

⁵ *Iḥyā’*, i, pp. 135, 146. Cf. *Waṣāya*, fol. 19a.

(حضور) of the heart in prayer, for, as he says, the real spirit and inner life of worship consists of humility and a good intention and the presence of the heart and single-mindedness, and these are the points upon which al-Muḥāsibī, writing 250 years earlier, had laid chief stress. This “presence” of the heart means the freedom of the heart from all except its attention to Him with Whom it is concerned. “Your heart is present,” writes al-Ghazālī, “when you come into the presence of someone accounted great (in this world) who has no power to injure you or benefit you, ought it not therefore to be present when you are in confidential intercourse with the King of kings, Whose sovereign power controls all that comes to you of good or ill?”¹ So also al-Muḥāsibī, “You show honour to one another and listen in silence to those who are your fellow-creatures. Is not God, to Whom belong glory and majesty, more worthy of reverence? Why do you not give greater honour to Him Who is Almighty than you give to His creatures?”² The presence of the heart, said al-Ghazālī, “is attained by concentrating the attention, and since your heart follows after that to which it is attentive, it is present only with that which concerns it,” and this presence or lack of it depends on him who prays.³ So also writes al-Muḥāsibī, “Exert yourselves, my brethren, to ensure the presence of your hearts in prayer and do not be deceived by those whose bodies are present in prayer, while their hearts are directed towards the vanities of this world.”⁴

al-Ghazālī emphasizes the importance of a sound intention, of single-mindedness and of sincerity (صدق) in the service of God and quotes al-Muḥāsibī by name in this connection.⁵ He points out that intention (نية), desire (إرادة), and purpose (قصد) are different expressions denoting one meaning, and

¹ *Iḥyā’*, i, pp. 142, 145.

² *Waṣāya*, fol. 17b.

³ *Iḥyā’*, i, p. 145.

⁴ *Waṣāya*, fol. 18. Cf. *Ri’āya*, fol. 15a.

⁵ *Iḥyā’*, iv, p. 328.

shows how the intention represents the desire, which is carried out in action for the sake of God or for the sake of this world.¹ So, too, had al-Muḥāsibī emphasized the fact that the intention was the essential part of action and he defined it as the "desire of the servant to act in one particular way, and when he wishes to do that act to that end, then that wish is an intention, directed either towards God Most High or towards another than Him."²

In his mystical teaching, though his doctrines are much more developed than those of his predecessor, al-Ghazālī follows al-Muḥāsibī in his main ideas, and there is no doubt that in setting forth his doctrine of gnosis, love, and fellowship, al-Ghazālī had before him al-Muḥāsibī's treatise on Love, as we have it in Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā*. Of the mystic gnosis (معركة) al-Ghazālī says, like al-Muḥāsibī, that it is an inner light, which is granted when God has taken possession of His servant's heart and has illuminated him with the light of gnosis, and when God thus controls the heart, mercy is bestowed upon it and light shines within and the secret of the invisible world is revealed to that one . . . and the inner meaning of the Divine Truth. . . . To the prophets and the saints is the mystery revealed and upon their hearts the light is shed, because they have freed their hearts from all other preoccupation and are concerned with God alone, and "when any one is God's, God is his". Again he writes, "The purpose of the gnostics is only to attain to this knowledge and possess it, for it is a consolation unknown to the souls from which it is hidden, and when it is attained, it destroys all anxieties and sensual desires and the heart becomes filled with its grace . . . because of that perfect attainment, which is above all else that can be attained. . . . He who knows God, knows that all joys (save only sensual desires) are included in this joy."³ "The stage of bliss (درجة النعيم),"

¹ Ibid., iv, pp. 312, 326, 330.

² *Ri'āya*, fol. 66a.

³ *Iḥyā'*, iii, pp. 16, 17; iv, p. 267.

al-Muḥāsibī had written, "is the attainment of gnosis, which is the heart's approach unto God and to the invisible world."¹ Again he says that the gnostic has within him an inner light (نور البصائر) by means of which he apprehends the spiritual meaning of things and knows that he has attained unto the Truth.² The gnostics are those who have been found worthy of apprehending the Divine Unity and of understanding that all is God and all is His, who have passed beyond the sphere of merely human knowledge (علم) and its limitations, who are those to whom God gives His guidance and His favour and His love, who know Him and are known of Him. The prophets and the saints are characterized by this gift of gnosis, for they are no longer concerned with the claims of human desire and are oblivious to all save God. The desires of the flesh no longer have any power over them; they have directed their activities to one end and they know what is their real concern.³

The gnostic, to al-Ghazālī, as to al-Muḥāsibī, is identified with the lover of God, and to al-Ghazālī, too, fellowship (انس) with the beloved is the sign of the lover. Fellowship with God, al-Ghazālī states, means separation from the creatures, and he quotes a saying of Ibrāhīm b. Adham on the subject and here proceeds to use the very words and phrases of al-Muḥāsibī, taking from him a considerable section which includes sayings of Rābī'a al-'Adawīyya and the prophet David and a conversation between 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd and a Christian monk. He gives al-Muḥāsibī's definition of fellowship as his own and repeats verbatim his teaching on "presence" (حضور) and "absence" (غيبة).⁴

al-Ghazālī follows al-Muḥāsibī in his teaching on Satisfaction (رضا), acquiescence in God's will, stating that affliction

¹ *Makāsib wa'l-Wara'*, fol. 35b.

² *Kitāb al-Mustarshid*, fol. 4.

³ *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, fols. 202, 240a ff. (Leyden Or. 311a), *Muḥāsabat al-Nufūs*, fol. 3.

⁴ *Iḥyā'*, iv, p. 291. Cf. *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā'*, fols. 240b ff. *Ri'āya*, fol. 7a.

from God is a mark of His love : those who bear it patiently will be the recipients of His favour and those who welcome it with satisfaction will become His chosen saints, for love issues in satisfaction with the will of the beloved.¹ In his teaching on the mystic "union", the ultimate goal of the traveller on the way to God, al-Ghazālī uses the same tradition of David used by al-Muḥāsibī concerning those into whom the Spirit of God has entered, so that they have become spiritualized (يَكُونُوا رُوحَانِيْنَ).² These are they who have attained (الْوَاِصِلُوْنَ), whose eyes "God hath closed to all but Himself and hath made them deaf to all words save His. These are they whom He hath called to be His saints, who are His and His alone".³

These examples, to which others might be added, show clearly al-Ghazālī's indebtedness to his great predecessor, both for the main trend of his ascetical, devotional, and mystical teaching and for many of the ideas and illustrations of which he makes use in his rule for the religious life. Living two and a half centuries later than al-Muḥāsibī, al-Ghazālī had access to a much greater store of material, and the wide extent of his travels for which we find no parallel in the life of al-Muḥāsibī, together with his own outstanding genius, enabled him to develop and expand the lines of thought suggested in the writings of his predecessor, but there is no doubt that the foundations of that great system of orthodox Islamic Mysticism which al-Ghazālī made it his business to bring to completion, had already been well and truly laid.⁴

¹ *Iḥyā'*, iv, pp. 297 ff. Cf. *Hilyat*, fols. 235a ff.

² *Iḥyā'*, iv, p. 295.

³ *Iḥyā'*, ii, p. 236. Cf. *Hilyat*, fol. 233b.

⁴ For a detailed study of the life and teaching of al-Muḥāsibī cf. my *Early Mystic of Baghdad*.